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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISTANBUL 001019

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/30/2014

TAGS: PREL IZ TU NATO

SUBJECT: A/S JONES MEETING WITH IRAQI FM ZIBARI AND IRAQI MOD SHA'ALAN

Classified By: A/S Elizabeth Jones for Reasons 1.5 (b&d)

¶1. (C) Summary. During the run-up to the Istanbul Summit June 27, A/S Jones and CPA Foreign Policy Director Ronald Neumann discussed Iraq's security challenges and a new NATO-Iraq relationship with Iraqi FM Zibari and Iraqi MoD Sha'alan. Jones and Zibari agreed that their informal meeting with NATO foreign ministers June 27 would be an important event both symbolically and practically. Zibari said that Iraq had lost much time due to the occupation, but that he believed the new Iraqi cabinet members were willing to "risk everything" to overcome the terrorist threat and build the new Iraq. Zibari and Sha'alan stressed the Ministry of Defense desperately needed equipment, as well as training, for Iraq's security forces. Zibari also said that Iraqi PM Allawi recently clarified that the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) did not want Turkish units on Iraqi soil, but that Turkish training officers and headquarters staff were welcome. End Summary.

Important Beginning

¶2. (C) Prior to the informal Foreign Ministers Meeting June 27, Jones told Iraqi FM Zibari and Iraqi MoD Sha'alan that Iraqi PM Allawi's letter to NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer requesting Alliance support for Iraq was a very important beginning to the new NATO-Iraq relationship. The informal NATO meeting was an important event, both symbolically and practically, as NATO Allies would have the opportunity to hear views from Iraqis directly. Jones said that although NATO was already providing support to the Polish-led multinational Division, Allied leaders would decide at the Istanbul Summit June 28 to ask NATO to take on a collective mission to train the Iraqi security forces. A NATO training mission was significant because it would lead to a comprehensive approach; Iraqi authorities could coordinate directly with NATO, which would help match training requirements with member-state capabilities. Jones said that the NATO Military Committee had ideas on how NATO could support Iraq, but that those ideas were not worth anything unless Iraqi leaders are engaged in developing them.

To Rule is To Decide

¶3. (C) Zibari said he is finding that "to rule is to decide" and he believes that the new cabinet is made up of people who are willing to "risk everything" to fight in the struggle to build the new Iraq. Zibari said that terrorists, anti-democratic forces, Ba'athists and many regional countries are trying to make the new Iraq fail. He said they would not win, but they would delay progress and make it difficult to succeed.

IIG Progressing, Gaining Political Support

¶4. (C) FM Zibari thanked Jones and the State NEA Bureau for efforts to overcome difficulties over the past year. He was pleased that the hard work on smaller issues had now opened the way to address more strategic decisions. Zibari agreed that the informal Foreign Ministers meeting was important and said that Allawi had prepped him to request training and other types of support. He also said that this meeting -- similar to the recent G-8 Sea Island Summit and the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) conference -- would have a big impact in Iraq and a political statement by the Alliance was important to recognize the progressive and positive stage the IIG had achieved.

Water Under the Bridge

¶5. (C) Zibari said that he had warned the U.S. not to move from liberator to occupier, and that even the closest friends of the U.S. had gone back on it. He complained that Iraq had lost time, lost men, and lost money, but that this was "water under the bridge" and the IIG now has a new opportunity to address the country's needs. According to Zibari, it is

vital to demonstrate that the transfer of sovereignty is real, i.e. that ministries are spending money, purchasing equipment, and reaching out to other countries. No one wants the return of Saddam, or a "little Saddam"; no one wants extremists or a theocracy, but people want the confidence that they can build their own future.

Up to Iraqis

¶16. (C) Zibari said Iraq needs security to make this goal happen. He said that CPA had encouraged Iraq's leaders to open their borders and relax their rules to encourage investment, but that without security, efforts to revitalize the economy would fail. To achieve these goals, Zibari said they would need NATO's support.

¶17. (C) Zibari said that in the end, however, Iraq's future will depend on Iraqis and that it will be crucial to have the right Iraqi leaders. He regretted that most Iraqis were trained with weapons and that even the opposition had to take up arms. Zibari said the key was to find the right people to stand up and challenge this. He said the cabinet was aware of the risks -- car bombs, assassins, plots -- but that it could not give up.

...And Equipping?

¶18. (C) Jones shared highlights of the draft Political Statement on Iraq to which Allied leaders would agree at the Istanbul Summit. Zibari asked why the statement only mentioned that Allies had decided to provide training, but not equipment. Jones said that the U.S. concept included both training and equipping Iraqi security forces, and she encouraged them to tell NATO Foreign Ministers of their priorities for assistance.

¶19. (C) Zibari said that the Iraqi army needs counterintelligence training and equipment so that it can be a visible deterrence force. Iraq has thousands of police, but not enough weapons, cars, or communications. Zibari said NATO could help in many areas, but that he understood some Allies wanted to "settle certain scores" and were reluctant to send troops to Iraq. Zibari said Allies could help in other ways, such as with training and equipment; his contacts tell him that Italy and Germany were open to this type of support. However, U.S. support was most critical in his view.

¶10. (C) MoD Sha'alan added that the Ministry of Defense is a new ministry and is "in need of everything." According to Sha'alan, Iraq's security forces need weapons, light aircraft, vehicles, and command and control communications equipment. He said that Iraq faced serious threats from border infiltrations, and that training on NATO's high-tech border control techniques, modern communications, and leadership training would be crucial. Sha'alan stressed that weapons training required weapons, however, and that Iraq needed NATO's help in this area. He asked for help in pressing Gulf states to finance Iraq's equipment needs. Jones said that a new NATO International Cooperation Initiative (ICI), which would be launched in Istanbul, would open the door to security cooperation with Gulf states and other countries. She suggested that this new framework might help to bring support to Iraq from Gulf states.

Time and Turkey

¶11. (C) Zibari stressed that time was an important factor and that they could not afford a lengthy process for assistance. Jones said that according to the Alliance decision, NATO must develop modalities "on an urgent basis" for implementing the decision. Zibari also said that PM Allawi recently clarified that the IIG did not want Turkish units on Iraqi soil, but that Turkish training and headquarters staff were welcome.

¶12. (U) This cable was approved by A/S Jones.
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